

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 12, 2013, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Dick Ryon, North Bend resident; Doug McClelland, Washington DNR; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Bernie McKinney, forest landowner; Nate Veranth, forest landowner; Rex Thompson, forester; Ron Baum, forest landowner; Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe

Staff: Alan Painter, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); Kristi McClelland, Water & Land Resources Division (WLRD); Kathy Creahan, WLRD; and Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Vice Chair Dick Ryon called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Minutes: Motion 1-0913 That the minutes of the May 9, 2013 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2-0913 That the minutes of the July 11, 2013 meeting be approved with corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Forest, Fish and Farming Issues in the Snoqualmie Valley – A Progress Report

Kristi McClelland, King County Forester

Kristi McClelland reported on forest-related outreach in the Snoqualmie Valley. First, she reported on the “We Are All in This Together Twilight Tour,” which was co-sponsored by a number of non-profit and government agencies and endorsed by the Rural Forest Commission (Commission). She noted that Commission Vice Chair Dick Ryon served on the project steering committee. The tour brought rural landowners and policy makers together to observe and discuss farm, fish, and forest management issues in the Snoqualmie Valley. Kristi said that a theme was the importance of communities valuing the surrounding environment and understanding how to get the best from green infrastructure by investing in it, just as one would invest in built infrastructure. Kristi said that a total of 43 “asks” came out of discussions during the course of the tour. Deputy King County Executive Fred Jarrett challenged the participants to come up with solutions to the issues and “asks” that the tour evoked.

Among the issues discussed on the Twilight Tour were:

- There is need for a soft surface trail permitting process at the King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER) that reduces people’s fear of having public access trails on their property.
- Complex agricultural permit issues affect farmers and ultimately limit what food is available in farmers markets.

- A number of erosion, fish habitat, and flooding issues affect valley properties. For example, it is difficult for landowners on alluvial fans to respond if there is sediment deposition or emergent new creek channels on their land because regulations are so complex and restrictive.

Some of the outcomes of the tour and Deputy Executive Jarrett's challenge to find solutions are:

- King County DPER has made a commitment to make permitting more open and efficient.
- A strategy for approaching the alluvial fan issues is emerging.
- County staff can now bring forestry permitting or code problems to an internal DPER/DNRP work group that heretofore addressed only agricultural permits or codes.
- With the support of the Commission, County Code now has a provision for the active management of open spaces associated with urban subdivisions. Under the old rules, these areas were often were "no touch" areas with no means for addressing hazard tree or forest health problems.
- On October 19, 2013, a Vashon Island Economic Forum will promote local wood products to forest owners and architects.
- The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust and Stewardship Partners are spearheading a Snoqualmie Strategy to make linkages among communities, the environment, and the economy. Valley farms and the Snoqualmie Tribe are among the partners.
- "Where Cows Meet Clams" is a KCD grant-funded project led by Stewardship Partners and Calyx Green Tourism to develop a suite of tools to revitalize the rural economy and protect the environment.
- WSU Extension's Coached Forest Stewardship Planning Course is training two interns from the Snoqualmie Tribe in the basics of forest management to prepare them for roles in the Tribe's habitat restoration projects, nursery, and traditional botanic knowledge outreach.

Following her report on the Twilight Tour outcomes, Kristi asked the Commission for input on a request to the Built Green Program to award a higher number of points for locally grown and milled wood than are currently awarded. The commissioners made a number of suggestions regarding the letter. Kristi thanked the Commission for their input and said she would bring back a final draft letter for further review.

Agency and staff reports and announcements

King County Strategic Plan Update – Alan Painter reported that the County would soon kick off its public involvement process for its *Strategic Plan* update. In an effort to increase public participation, the County will employ an online forum called 'MindMix' in addition to a series of public meetings. He encouraged everyone to pass the word to their constituencies.

Firewise Community wildfire safety planning in King County

Linda Vane, King County Firewise Project Manager

Linda Vane provided an update on the County's work to promote the Firewise Communities/USA program in concert with local fire districts and Washington State DNR. She explained that in spite of the King County's rainy reputation, homes in the wildland urban interface are at risk from wildfire. Risk is highest where dead vegetation and ladder fuels have built up in forests and around homes. Extended drought and windy conditions increase the risk of wildfire getting out of control. She went on to explain the steps that homeowners can take to create defensible space around their homes. Most of these actions are simple maintenance to reduce fuels near structures. She said that the County offers residents free risk assessments and help with creating Firewise action plans. Dick Ryon commented that Firewise addresses a resource issue as well as community safety.

[www.kingcounty.gov/environment/waterandland/forestry/forestfire.aspx]

Update on the King Conservation District/ King County Task Force and Conservation Panel Process

Brandy Reed, King Conservation District (KCD) and Dick Ryon, RFC Vice Chair

Dick Ryon, who represents the Commission on the KCD Task Force, introduced Brandy. He explained the process and provided an overview of the primary issues that the group was tasked with resolving. The process was convened by the KCD and King County. Dick commented that the work of the Task Force had involved close analysis of existing conservation services and brainstorming on services that are inadequate or absent in the region. He explained that over the course of months the Task Force had narrowed a large number of ideas down to six salient proposals for conservation services. The Task Force, a group of professional people supported by KCD and County, had met two days before with their elected official counterparts on the KC Conservation Panel. He said that the Task Force and Conservation Panel came together with unanimity of views to support all six proposals put before them.

Dick provided a brief overview of the six proposals to address needs for additional conservation services in the county. He went on to explain that future meetings of the Task Force and Conservation Panel would address governance and administration issues such as low participation in KCD elections.

Brandy Reed observed that the KCD had tasked itself with conveying two themes to their stakeholders on the Task Force and Conservation Panel. First was the role of the KCD's incentive-based programming as a complement to regulatory programs. Second, was that half of the county land base is in private ownership, which means that there is not a centralized system of land management. With such a diversity of land managers, there is a need for services that will address management of the private land base, she said. Brandy added that as a regional agency the KCD can cross-jurisdictional lines to address environmental problems in cities as well as unincorporated areas.

Brandy said that the twelve Puget Sound conservation districts are working together to address regional issues in the context of the regional-statewide-national conservation district system to align priorities on local and regional levels. She emphasized the value that the KCD brings to its service area because it is part of a larger regional network of service providers.

Brandy commented that the six proposals that Dick described are not entirely new service lines. These are things that the KCD has been doing for years and the proposals introduce a question of scale – adding a new twist, or a new approach, she said. For the KCD the issue will be one of capacity when the time come to respond to the recommendations; doing more for small forest landowners and investing in the capacity to do land stewardship, she explained.

Equity and Social Justice Training

Richard Gelb, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Richard Gelb presented a training for the Commission on the County's Equity and Social Justice program. He explained the policy framework for the initiative and the Commission members' role in advancing the effort. He showed the group how the County intends for all Boards and Commissions to consider:

- Incorporating Equity & Social Justice in all decision-making;
- Fostering an organization that promotes opportunity; and
- Building capacity for inclusive engagement.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on November 14, 2013, at the Preston Community Center.

Staff Liaison: Linda Vane, at 206-477-4842 or linda.vane@kingcounty.gov